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UNCLAS MUSCAT 001153

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/PPD, NEA/ARPI

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TAGS: [KISL](#) [KPAO](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: OMANI OPINION MAKERS SPEAK OUT AGAINST RELIGIOUS
EXTREMISM

REF: A. SECSTATE 131453

[B](#). MUSCAT 1090

[C](#). SECSTATE 121757

Summary

[1](#). Following the recent wave of violence in Iraq, including Omani denunciations of the terror attack in London and murder of the Egyptian ambassador-designate in Baghdad (ref B), there have been further statements by the government and press aimed at turning people away from extremist, violent religious ideologies.

Top Minister Speaks Out

[2](#). Oman's top security chief, Minister of the Royal Office General Ali Majid al-Ma'amari, issued a statement on July 18 in which he called for the public's vigilance against extremism. According to the statement, he praised the awareness, vigilance, discipline and rationalism of Omani citizens in the face of insidious efforts initiated "for one reason or the other." Citing the Sultan's advocacy of tolerance between citizens, he called on the public to turn a "deaf ear to rumors and lies meant to destabilize countries and to listen to the voice of reason and wisdom." While reaffirming the Sultan's promise not to allow the state to "confiscate thought," the minister warned that this does not mean that the state will tolerate "extremist thought or destructive ideas."

Religious Supplement Sets Record Straight

[3](#). The minister's sentiments were reinforced in the July 19 weekly religious supplement to the government-owned Arabic daily "Oman." The supplement focused on articles and statements by Arab religious leaders denouncing in particular the violence in Iraq directed at both diplomats and civilians. The supplement carried an article from Al-Azhar (Egypt) University professor Dr. Ahmad Muhammed al-Hufi, who recounted the important example set at the historic Badr Battle, when Muslims could not agree on whether to kill or enslave their captives. The Prophet Mohammed decreed that the captives should be freed entirely on the condition that they each teach 10 Muslim children how to read and write. Another professor, Abd al-Hakim al-Saidi, wrote that the American Fourteen Points were derived from Islamic principles on such issues as the treatment of captives, prohibitions against killing women, children and the elderly, and non-aggression among neighbors.

[4](#). Affirming that Islam did not sanction the attacks in Iraq, one author quoted Islamic scholar Ahmed Kamal Abu al-Majd, who wrote that Islam was the first religion to establish principles of protecting diplomats in time of war, quoting the Prophet Mohammed as saying "Ambassadors shall not be harmed." The author also cited the Prophet's instructions to Muslims during war not to kill a woman, a child, an elderly person, a captive, or those who have fled. Al-Azhar professor Abd al-Salam Muhammed is likewise cited in saying that Islam forbids the torture of captives in order to obtain military information about the enemy. He quoted Imam Malik in replying to a question about the permissibility of torturing captives as saying, "I have never heard of it."

BALTIMORE